

This afternoon Gus visited with [Veterans Administration Secretary Eric Shinseki](#) .

Gus raised the need for adding a second regional claims office in Florida to reduce the VA claims backlog. At 1.7 million, Florida has the second largest population of military veterans in the United States trailing only California which is home to three claims offices. Currently, Florida's only regional office is located in St. Petersburg. With thousands of disability claims coming in daily, the backlog at Florida's sole Veterans Affairs office is severe.



Gus also discussed efforts to clean up the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Program database to eliminate fraud and abuse perpetrated against our nation's veterans.

You may recall the [St. Petersburg Times](#) recently covered a government report which highlighted several instances of fraud and abuse:

A Tampa company got a \$900,000 Air Force contract through a federal program benefiting veteran-owned businesses but funneled the job to another firm, according to a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

...

U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Palm Harbor, filed a bill this summer his office said would tackle the problem.

The bill would require all federal agencies and prime contractors to consider only those businesses that are verified in the database of veteran-owned businesses that the VA runs under the Center for Veterans Enterprise.

[Click here](#) for more information on H.R. 3363.